

Now, the origin of these remarkable "secondary sexual characters" is explained by Darwin simply by a choice or selection which takes place in the propagation of animals. In most animals the number of individuals of both sexes is unequal; either the number of the female or the number of the male individuals is greater, and, as a rule, when the season of propagation approaches, a struggle takes place between the rivals for the possession of the animals of the other sex. It is well known with what vigour and vehemence this struggle is fought out among the higher animals—among mammals and birds—especially among those of polygamous habits. Among gallinaceous birds, where for one cock there are several hens, a severe struggle takes place between the competing cocks for as large a harem as possible. The same is the case with many ruminating animals. Among stags and deer, for instance, at the period of rut, deadly struggles take place between the males for the possession of the females. The secondary sexual character which here distinguishes the males—the antlers of stags and deer—not possessed by the female, is, according to Darwin, the consequence of that struggle. Here the motive and cause determining the struggle is not, as in the case of the struggle for individual existence, self-preservation, but the preservation of the species—propagation. There are numerous passive weapons of defence, as well as active weapons for attack. The lion's mane, not possessed by the female, is evidently such a weapon of defence; it is an excellent means of protection against the bites which the male lions try to inflict on each other's necks when fighting for the females; consequently those males with the strongest manes have the greatest advantage in the sexual struggle.